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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, JULY 14, 2008

In Today's Papers

Prosecutor to Disclose 'Ergenekon' Indictment Monday
All news outlets report on Monday, prosecutor Zekeriya Oz is expected to submit his indictment in the 13-month 'Ergenekon' investigation to court. Chief Prosecutor Aykut Cengiz Engin and Deputy Chief Prosecutor Turan Colakkadi are expected to forward the indictment today. The indictment, which mentions four separate military takeover attempts since 2003, contains charges against 85 suspects, 48 of them already in custody. Papers say the indictment would include evidence provided by 20 "secret witnesses" whose identities are not disclosed to assure their safety. Papers also claim that the prosecutor will prepare an additional indictment for retired generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon, as well as others suspects arrested in recent operations.

The media speculated that the indictment would tie notorious, politically motivated attacks to Ergenekon, including the attack on the Council of State (Danistay), the murder of Armenian-Turkish editor Hrant Dink and the slaying of three Christian Bible publishers in Malatya. Conservative-nationalist Bugun says prosecutors in charge of the Ergenekon investigation have asked the military General Staff (TGS) to allow legal action against active military officers supposedly linked to the illegal network.

US Istanbul Consulate Attack Investigation Continues
All papers over the weekend and today report twelve suspects have been taken into custody in connection with last week's attack on the US Consulate in Istanbul. Four of the suspects were taken to court for further proceedings and one suspect, Dursun Patan, was formally arrested. Patan claimed Erhan Kargin, a suspect killed during the attack, used to tell everybody in his neighborhood that he would attack Israeli and American targets in Turkey. Islamist-oriented Zaman says suspects detained in connection with the attack fingered Kargin as the mastermind and that he had been visited by "some state officials" indicating a connection to the "deep state." Papers also claim he received training in Afghanistan and returned to Turkey in 2007. Another suspect, unregistered taxi driver Cebrail Kosanarslan, said he was not involved in the attack, but was simply forced by the attackers to drive them to the Consulate. Mainstream

Hurriyet, however, reports Kosanarslan washed his car immediately after the attack, probably to hide critical evidence. Mainstream Milliyet writes in "Consulate Suspect Has Been a Human Shield," that another of the detainees, Resat Anli, "had traveled to Syria and Iran and had served as a human shield against a possible attack by the US on Iran."

Papers over the weekend reported President Bush phoned President Abdullah Gul to express his deepest condolences to the families of Turkish police officers who died defending the US Consulate in Istanbul. The Turkish President's Office said Bush expressed gratitude for the Turkish police officers' defence of the Consulate.

Saturday's papers featured US Consul General Sharon Wiener's visit to the policeman injured in the attack, Osman Dagli. She presented him with a bouquet of lily which symbolize trust, according to media reports. Saturday's papers carried Ambassador Ross Wilson's remarks that US security officials did not intervene in the attack because they were not carrying arms during that particular time of the day.

The Mediterranean Union Summit

All papers: Prime Minister Erdogan Sunday attend the Union for Mediterranean summit in Paris. Mainstream Milliyet reports that during a 40 minute meeting with French President Sarkozy, PM Erdogan suggested that France should act responsibly during its EU term presidency, and invited Sarkozy to Turkey. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes that on the closure case against the AKP, Sarkozy said that the EU expects the court decision to be in line with democratic and rule of law principles. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries

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Israeli PM Ehud Olmert's comments at the summit that Israel and the Syrians have never been closer to making peace.

Editorial Commentary on Med Union

"The Mediterranean Union and Turkey"

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah (7/14): "The Med Union has given French President Sarkozy an important political gain. The French leader managed to bring Syrian and Israeli leaders around the same table, and this achievement is important to his ambition of being a leader in the European Union. Until now, French power in the Middle East has been insignificant poor; therefore, the Olmert-Assad meeting at the Mediterranean Summit has paved the way for Paris's presence in the region. Whether or not France ultimately succeeds depends on a few factors. First of all, the White House administration will determine whether France will be given a role as a Middle East player. Secondly the French administration has to get it over its 'Turkey complex' and accept Ankara as its helper in the Middle East. Eventually, I hope France will accept Turkey as a reality in the Middle East and also will act appropriately as far as the Turkey-EU process is concerned."

"Erdogan and Assad Saved Sarkozy's Image"

Semih Idiz commented in mainstream Milliyet (7/14): "After Germany's intervention in the Med Union process, the project could no longer be an absolute French power game in Mediterranean. So, even though the current Med Union project is not what Sarkozy had in mind, he had to steal the show anyway. Given the participation level, as well as the lack of enthusiasm, it looks like the Med Union did not have a strong start. There is still no clarity about the ultimate goal of the project. Israel looks like the only strong supporter, which is enough reason for the Arabs to become suspicious. Sarkozy was hoping to arrange a summit between Syria and Israel as a follow up to the Turkish-led Syria-Israel talks. The summit did not take place. However, Sarkozy still managed to save his image, and for that, he should thank Turkey. Turkey's participation to the meeting was very significant because, without Turkey, there wouldn't be any 'Mediterranean union.' The Med Union project is not an empty idea, and can be important if cooperation among Mediterranean countries can be established. Yet Turkey, given its rising political profile in the region, has a better chance for success than France."

PKK Threatens Germany

Liberal Radikal reports that after abducting three Germans last

week, the PKK now has threatened to attack German economic interests. In a statement sent to Firat News Agency the terrorist organization said, "The Turkish and German governments should prepare to sacrifice their economic interests for the Kurds fight for independence. We have the power to inflict heavy blows on Germany's economic interests in Turkey." PKK reiterated its threat regarding the abducted three Germans saying that "the Germans will not be released until after Germany's stance against the PKK changes. Angela Merkel is the only person we'll talk to on this issue."

Poll: 63 Percent Oppose AKP's Closure

Weekend Milliyet, Vatan, Bugun and Monday Cumhuriyet report on Metropoll public opinion research company poll that shows the distribution of votes among political parties would be as follows if elections were held today: AKP 40.4 percent, CHP 14.4, MHP 7.6, DP 1.1, DTP 1.0, GP 0.6, Others 3.6, Indecisive 13.6, Will not vote 2.5, and No answer 5.7.

Sixty-three percent of those interviewed opposed a possible closure of the AKP. Forty-four percent said they would vote for a party backed by Erdogan if the AKP is closed. Metropoll is a company known to be close to the ruling AKP. The survey conducted on June 26-27 canvassed the views of 1557 people in 26 Turkish provinces.

TV News:

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CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Prime Minister Erdogan, accompanied by six cabinet ministers, will travel to Lefkosa on July 18 to meet Turkish Cypriot leaders, opposition party leaders and NGO representatives. Erdogan will join July 20 celebrations held to celebrate the founding of Turkish Cyprus.

- Two PKK terrorists have been killed by security forces in the eastern province of Tunceli.

- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP will hold a convention on July 20 to pick a new party leader.

International News

- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel and Palestine have "never been this close" to a peace deal.

- The British government is to sponsor a theological board of leading imams and Muslim women in an attempt to refute the ideology of violent extremists.

- About 5,400 residents are evacuated in Osaka, Japan as army experts dispose of a large unexploded bomb believed to have been dropped by the US military during World War II.

WILSON